

IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please AMEND claim 1 in accordance with the following:

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A media-distribution-resource management apparatus managing shared resources of media distribution servers and connected via a network to the media distribution servers and content distributors, comprising:

a resource-utilization-information management unit managing shared-resource information about both available network resources and available media-distribution-system resources;

a shared-resource management unit allocating or re-allocating the shared resources based on a resource utilization request from each content distributor;

a distribution management unit ~~reserving~~managing reservation of a part of the shared resources allocated or re-allocated by the shared-resource management unit and ~~distributing~~managing distribution of the part of the shared resources to each of the media distribution servers;

a distributor management unit managing information about each content distributor; and

a viewer management unit managing information about a viewer permitted to access at least one of the media distribution servers.

2. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The media-distribution-resource management apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said resource-utilization-information management unit comprises:

a server-resource management unit managing resource information about a media-distribution server; and

a network-resource management unit managing information about network resources for media distribution.

3. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The media-distribution-resource management apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said shared-resource management unit comprises:

- a resource-utilization-information extraction unit extracting available resource information from said resource-utilization-information management unit;
- a shared-resource-availability display unit displaying information about available shared resources for a content distributor;
- a resource-utilization-information input unit the content distributor inputting a resource utilization request;
- a shared-resource distribution unit distributing a utilization right of the shared resource in a specific time period to said distribution management unit installed in each of the content distributors based on information that is obtained in each time zone by the resource-utilization-information extraction unit and resource-utilization-information input unit;
- a shared-resource-utilization amount extraction unit extracting a utilization situation of the shared resource in a specific time period; and
- a shared-resource re-distribution unit redistributing a utilization right of an unused one of the shared resources to said distribution management unit based on both the utilization situation and distribution request in a specific time period extracted by said distribution management unit.

4. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The media-distribution-resource management apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said distribution management unit comprises:

- an available reservation-candidate display unit displaying available content candidates to be reserved within a scope of a utilization right distributed by said shared-resource management unit;
- a distribution-reservation input unit making a viewer select at least one content to be distributed out of the displayed candidates;
- a distribution-reservation management unit reserving distribution for a viewer based on the selection made by the viewer from the displayed candidates;
- a direct viewing reception unit making a viewer candidate without a reservation within a media distribution time;
- a shared-resource confirmation unit making an inquiry for said shared-resource management unit about whether an unused one of the shared resources is available, based on the selection made by the viewer from the displayed candidates;
- a direct-viewing permitting unit permitting viewing within the media distribution time based on the utilization right re-distributed by said shared-resource management unit; and

a distribution-instructing unit instructing one of the media distribution servers to perform media distribution to a viewer that is permitted to receive direct distribution out of both viewers with the reservation of media distribution and viewer candidates without reservations.

5. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The media-distribution-resource management apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said distributor management unit comprises:

a distributor-information input unit receiving from the content distributor an identifier of the content distributor; and

a distributor authentication unit authenticating the content distributor based on the identifier.

6. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The media-distribution-resource management apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said viewer management unit comprises:

a viewer-information input unit inputting information about a viewer candidate; and

a viewer authentication unit authenticating the viewer candidate based on the input information.

7. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer-readable storage medium which records a program for enabling a computer to perform a method of managing shared resources of media distribution servers and information about content distributors when the program is read by the computer, the method comprising:

managing shared-resource information about both an available network resource and an available media-distribution-system resource;

allocating or re-allocating the shared resources based on a resource-utilization request from each content distributor;

reserving a part of the shared resources as allocated or re-allocated and distributing the part of the shared resources to each of the media distribution servers;

managing information about each content distributor; and

managing information about viewers permitted to access at least one of the media distribution servers.

8. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A media-distribution-resource management apparatus managing shared resources and connected via a network to media distribution servers and content distributors, comprising:

resource-utilization-information management means for managing shared-resource information about both available network resources and available media-distribution-system resources;

shared-resource management means for allocating or re-allocating the shared resources based on a resource utilization request from each content distributor;

distribution management means for reserving a part of the shared resources allocated or re-allocated by the shared-resource management means and distributing the part of the shared resources to each media distribution servers;

distributor management means for managing information about each content distributor; and

viewer management means for managing information about viewers permitted to access at least one of the media distribution servers.

9. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A carrier signal which carries to a computer a program for enabling the computer to perform a function of managing shared resources of media distribution servers and information about content distributors when the program is read by the computer, the function comprising:

a resource-utilization-information management function to manage shared-resource information about both an available network resource and an available media-distribution-system resource;

a shared-resource management function to allocate or re-allocate the shared resources based on a resource-utilization request from each content distributor;

a distribution management function to reserve a part of the shared resources allocated or re-allocated by the shared-resource management function and distribute the part of the shared resources to each of the media distribution servers;

a distributor management function to manage information about each content distributor; and

a viewer management function to manage information about viewers permitted to access at least one of the media distribution servers.